"I heard about that," the Duke replied, "and I thought myself that Worchester was rather wet about the whole affair."

The Marchioness threw up her hands. "My dear, what was he to do when the Prince of Wales was telling him he had to behave like a gentleman?"

"I assure you, you need not worry on my account," the Duke said firmly.

At the same time he understood why the Marchioness was apprehensive. It had not struck him last night that he should somehow acquire a chaperon in the shape of a married woman for Luella. Now he thought of it, he realised he should have asked his secretary if there was someone available on the estate. But he had been so appalled by Vecchio's flagrant threat to blackmail him that he had not thought of anything else.

The Marchioness put her hand on his arm. "You must remember, dear boy," she said, "that you are not only a very attractive young man, but also the Duke of Ingatestone. You are expected to keep up your position and also provide an heir to follow you."

"You do not have to worry, Aunt Anne," the Duke protested. "I am still 'feeling my feet' as the owner of this magnificent estate, and I have no intention of getting married until I am very much older."

"We shall have to see what Her Majesty the Queen has to say about that!" the Marchioness observed.

The Duke gave her a sharp look, but thought it would be a mistake to ask her to explain herself. It was with a sense of relief that he realised that Bates was bringing the champagne which he had ordered.

* * *

Upstairs Luella found that Mrs Moore had already had her clothes put back into her trunk. Enrico's small belongings had also been packed. "Thank you very much, Mrs Moore," Luella said.

She then realised she was expected to tip the two maids who had waited on her. She went to her handbag and found the few Italian coins given to her by Signor Vecchio. She divided them between the two women, apologising for the fact that it was not English money. She explained that she had had no time to change it when she arrived in England.

"That's all right, Miss," one of them said, "an' I thinks I'll jus' keep mine for luck!"

"And I hope that is what it will bring you," Luella said. She was thinking however that she now had no money left – literally not a penny. She could only hope that the Duke was right and her father's publishers would be delighted at the idea of having a new book from him. Then perhaps they would advance her some money.

"Please, God . . let them be . . generous," she prayed. She knew she would feel embarrassed at having to ask the Duke to lend her money. But she realised that when she reached London she would have to find somewhere to stay.

Enrico had washed his hands and now she took him downstairs. She listened to him talking excitedly about riding until luncheon was ready. It was only a light meal, but Enrico obviously enjoyed every mouthful.

Luella however was worrying again about the future and especially what she could do about tonight.